



UPDATE FROM THE 2006 LEGISLATURE

To the citizens of the 16th Legislative District

STATE REPRESENTATIVE MAUREEN WALSH

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Thank you for taking time out of your day to read my newsletter – I appreciate it.

The holidays are behind us and I'm now in Olympia, as the 2006 legislative session is in full swing. It began on January 9 and is scheduled to run 60 days.

This will be my 14th year being directly involved with our Legislature. In my role as your state representative, I continue to enjoy and be amazed with the experience – and **it is an honor and privilege to serve you.**

To provide you a quick context, the political balance in Olympia favors the Democrats with majorities in the House (55-43), Senate (26-23), and governor's mansion. While I wish my party was able to shape the agenda, there are **great people on both sides of the political aisle** and **I look forward to working with them** on the issues important to our district and state.

My priorities as **your state representative** remain the same as the day you elected me to office: **helping farmers** with agriculture needs, **creating** and **preserving jobs**, **strengthening** our **schools**, making **health care** more **affordable**, and **protecting vulnerable citizens**. I discuss some of these issues in this newsletter.

In closing, I'd like to **thank you for allowing me to be your state representative**. I'm proud to have the opportunity to serve you.

Please contact me if I can ever be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Rep. Maureen Walsh

DISTRICT OFFICE CLOSED DURING THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION

In order to best serve our constituents, Sen. Mike Hewitt, Rep. Bill Grant and I share a local 16th Legislative District office in Walla Walla. This office will be closed while we are in Olympia for the 2006 legislative session. We will provide you information on when it will reopen after session.

RESOURCES ON THE INTERNET

If you need information about state government, you may find the following Internet sites to be great resources. Or, you can always call or e-mail my office.

hrc.leg.wa.gov/members/walsh/pressroom.htm

– offers my views and news releases on various issues.
access.wa.gov – provides access to state agency services, including applying for unemployment benefits, renewing car tabs, and much more.

leg.wa.gov – offers committee meeting schedules and nearly everything else you'd want to know about the Legislature.

2006 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

To the citizens of the 16th Legislative District

BEING RESPONSIBLE WITH STATE BUDGETS AND YOUR TAX DOLLARS



As state legislators, we are responsible for being **good stewards of your tax dollars**. In my mind, one of my key roles as your state representative is to decide how your tax dollars are most efficiently spent within state government.

One of the primary responsibilities of state legislators this session is to pass a **supplemental budget** – which is a **midcourse adjustment** to our state's two-year **operating budget**. Adjustments are usually minor, focused on accommodating certain state needs, and not policy-driven. I hope this is the case this year, too.

It's very important we are **fiscally responsible** with our supplemental budget – as with all our state budgets – and fight the

urge to spend more. This is especially important when you consider a December economic forecast that showed our state benefiting financially from a **national upturn in the economy**. This means **we may have a budget surplus** in the future.

However, **just because we have extra money doesn't mean we should spend it** right away. In fact, I support creating a **constitutional "rainy day" fund** that acts as protection for our state finances when we face economic downturns. To me, this is similar to what families do when they budget for emergencies.

HOUSE REPUBLICAN "LISTENING TOUR" CONCLUDES IN PASCO, GENERATES IDEAS

House Republicans traveled around Washington last fall **listening to the ideas and concerns of people** who make up this great state. The idea behind this **grassroots effort** was to go straight to the people and get ideas that can be brought back to the Legislature.

The tour concluded in an event at **Columbia Basin College in Pasco** on October 28. I'd like to thank all those who came to share their ideas. My leadership team and **I came away very impressed with your ideas** and used them – along with others – to develop an agenda for the 2006 legislative session.

The following is our "Commitment to Washington":

- remedial education services for students struggling with the WASL;
- a small business growth and opportunity package;
- "Jessica's Law" (stronger sex offender sentencing and tracking);
- restoring voter-approved state expenditure limits;
- ensuring property rights by changing the Growth Management Act; and
- enhancing penalties for meth, auto theft, and identity theft.



HELPING SMALL EMPLOYERS GROW THEIR BUSINESSES

While Washington may be experiencing the benefits of a national upturn in the economy, **our state's business climate is still not inviting**. If you were to ask small employers, most would tell you they face **too many state regulations**, a **high minimum wage**, **uncertainty** in our **unemployment insurance system**, and an **unfair B&O tax**.

The **first step** in helping our employers is to **reform state government**. If applied correctly, we can change state government in a way that helps employers, while not compromising worker safety or the environment. For example, we should remove unnecessary and costly **regulatory hurdles** and create **one-stop licensing, information, and assistance** for employers.

I also support extending **tax incentives for start-ups** and **small employers**.

The bottom line is **our employers need certainty** – and **this can be done through legislative processes** and breaking down regulatory barriers.



STATE REPRESENTATIVE MAUREEN WALSH



FRANKLIN COUNTY'S HISTORICAL COURTHOUSE RECEIVES STATE GRANT

I was proud to hear **Franklin County received nearly \$2.7 million** from the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation to assist in the **rehabilitation of its historic courthouse in Pasco**. Anyone who has been to this courthouse can speak to its beauty.

The Legislature appropriated around \$5 million from its 2005-07 biennium capital budget for the creation of the Historic County Courthouse Rehabilitation Grant Program, from which Franklin County benefited. **I voted for the capital budget last year.**

I know how important this grant is to so many people in Pasco and its surrounding areas. **I commend all those who sought out this grant** and recognize the fact that **a lot of work had to be done at the local level** before the grant could even be considered. Your hard work has paid off – and generations to come will benefit from it.

WHAT MY COMMITTEES ARE DOING

I serve on three House committees that met throughout the interim (time between legislative sessions) to attend workshops, listen to concerned constituencies, and tackle pertinent issues. I'm proud to say all three committees came into the 2006 legislative session with a head-start on important issues. Below is a look at my committees and what issues we will be addressing this year.

Children and Family Services

<http://www1.leg.wa.gov/House/Committees/CFS/>

I'm proud to have been **appointed ranking Republican** for the **House Children and Family Services Committee**. Very few freshman legislators are granted this great honor.

We're looking at foster care licensing by tribes, racial disproportionality in child welfare, faith- and community-based social services, children's mental health, autism, early learning and child safety. In addition, the move is on to address inadequacies in the administrative structure for the delivery of social and health services to children and families. We must restore people's faith in their government to be an agency of resources for families – as opposed to a punitive agency they fear.

Appropriations

<http://www1.leg.wa.gov/House/Committees/APP/>

We're determining the supplemental budget and monitoring expenses associated with K-12 education, mental health services, long-term care, state pensions, health care initiatives, chemical dependency treatment, and state information technology projects. Again, we hope to hold the line on spending the projected increased revenue.

Select Committee on Hood Canal

<http://www1.leg.wa.gov/House/Committees/HOOD/>

We're focusing specifically on the environmental health of Hood Canal. The issues we'll be considering include the quality of the water in the canal, management of the canal's fisheries and shellfish industries, and recreation on the canal.

MAKING HEALTH CARE MORE ACCESSIBLE AND AFFORDABLE

Health care insurance remains too expensive or unavailable for many people. Until we **address** some of our **systemic problems**, it will unfortunately continue to be this way. I believe there are four things we can do now to address our health care problems.

First, it's important we **prioritize and eliminate** some of the **state health insurance mandates**. We have nearly 50 mandates and while I support some of them, **others are unnecessary** and drive up the cost of insurance for everyone.

Second, we need **market-based solutions** that **allow people to pick tailored insurance plans** that meet their specific needs and are tied directly to associated costs. Not everyone needs a "Cadillac" plan, so to speak.

Third, we need to clear the way for **health savings accounts**, which allow people to use pretax dollars to pay for out-of-pocket health care expenses. This allows people to stretch their health care dollars.

Finally, we need **small group insurance reform** so workers and their employers can purchase affordable plans that cover the health care services they absolutely need. Most employers want to provide this benefit, but they just can't afford it.



HIGHER PRICES AT THE PUMP, FOR REGISTERING YOUR VEHICLES

New gas tax

As if higher prices at the pump weren't enough, you will also experience higher license tab renewal fees in 2006. Both are a **result of legislation that passed in the 2005 legislative session** in which I voted "no."

The higher prices at the pump are partly due to a **new 9.5 cent gas tax per gallon** that will be phased in over four years – July 1, 2005 (3 cents – already in effect);

July 1, 2006 (3 cents); July 1, 2007 (2 cents); and July 1, 2008 (1.5 cents).

The funding generated by this new tax will **help pay for transportation projects statewide, with a majority going to large Seattle-area projects.**

New weight fees

As part of the Transportation Partnership Package, **new annual vehicle weight fees will be assessed for new registrations and renewals** on or after January 1, 2006. Many of you may have already experienced this when renewing your tab fees.

These fees are expected to generate about \$1.4 billion over the next 16 years.

All vehicles up to 8,000 pounds scale weight or gross vehicle weight (GVW) will be assessed a new license tab fee. **The following fee schedule applies for all vehicles:**

- \$10 for vehicles under 4,000 pounds (this will affect about 85 percent of vehicles);
- \$20 for vehicles between 4,001 and 6,000 pounds;
- \$30 for vehicles between 6,001 and 8,000 pounds;
- \$75 for motorhomes;
- \$15 for personal trailers under 2,000 pounds (a reduction from the current \$30 fee).

STATE REPRESENTATIVE MAUREEN WALSH

UPDATE FROM THE 2006 LEGISLATURE

To the citizens of the 16th Legislative District



Rep. Walsh discusses the details of a bill with House Republican Leader Richard DeBolt.

State Representative Maureen Walsh

319 John L. O'Brien Building
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Phone: (360) 786-7836

E-mail: walsh.maureen@leg.wa.gov

Toll-Free Legislative Hotline:

1-800-562-6000

TTY (Hearing-impaired Hotline):

1-800-635-9993

Committees:

Appropriations
Children and Family Services, *Ranking Republican*
Select Committee on Hood Canal

Task forces and councils:

Washington Council for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect
Joint Task Force on Administration and Delivery of Services to Children and Families
Caring for Washington Individuals with Autism Task Force

State Representative Maureen Walsh
319 John L. O'Brien Building
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
OLYMPIA WA
PERMIT NO 92